

*Desire and Domestic  
Fiction*

A POLITICAL HISTORY  
OF THE NOVEL

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## Introduction: The Politics of Domesticating Culture, Then and Now

Thus towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were rewriting history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or the Wars of the Roses. The middle-class woman began to write.

VIRGINIA WOOLF, *A Room of One's Own*

From the beginning, domestic fiction actively sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and, in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power. This power emerged with the rise of the domestic woman and established its hold over British culture through her dominance over all those objects and practices we associate with private life. To her went authority over the household, leisure time, courtship procedures, and kinship relations, and under her jurisdiction the most basic qualities of human identity were supposed to develop.

To consider the rise of the domestic woman as a major event in political history is not, as it may seem, to present a contradiction in terms, but to identify the paradox that shapes modern culture. It is also to trace the history of a specifically modern form of desire that, during the early eighteenth century, changed the criteria for determining what was most important in a female. In countless educational treatises and works of fiction that were supposedly written for women, this form of desire came into being along with a new kind of woman. And by representing life with such a woman as not only desirable but also available to virtually anyone, this ideal eventually reached beyond the beliefs of region, faction, and religious sect to unify the interests of those groups who were neither extremely powerful nor very poor. During the eighteenth century, one author after another discovered that the customary way of understanding

social experience actually misrepresented human value. In place of the intricate status system that had long dominated British thinking, these authors began to represent an individual's value in terms of his, but more often in terms of *her*, essential qualities of mind. Literature devoted to producing the domestic woman thus appeared to ignore the political world run by men. Of the female alone did it presume to say that neither birth nor the accoutrements of title and status accurately represented the individual; only the more subtle nuances of behavior indicated what one was really worth. In this way, writing for and about the female introduced a whole new vocabulary for social relations, terms that attached precise moral value to certain qualities of mind.

It was at first only women who were defined in terms of their emotional natures. Men generally retained their political identity in writing that developed the qualities of female subjectivity and made subjectivity a female domain. It is fair to say that Sterne's heroes, like Fielding's Joseph Andrews, clearly declared themselves anomalous when they inverted the model and, as males, experienced life as a sequence of events that elicited sentimental responses. In this respect, they came to the reader in a form considered more appropriate for representing a female's experience than that of a male. In nineteenth century fiction, however, men were no longer political creatures so much as they were products of desire and producers of domestic life. As gender came to mark the most important difference among individuals, men were still men and women still women, of course, but the difference between male and female was understood in terms of their respective qualities of mind. Their psychological differences made men political and women domestic rather than the other way around, and both therefore acquired identity on the basis of personal qualities that had formerly determined female nature alone. During the course of *Wuthering Heights*, for example, one can see Heathcliff undergo a transformation that strips away the features of a Gypsy from Liverpool at the turn of the century and attributes all his behavior to sexual desire. By a similar process, Rochester loses his aristocratic bearing by the end of *Jane Eyre* to assume a role within a purely emotional network of relationships overseen by a woman. It is only by thus subordinating all social differences to those based on gender that these novels bring order to social relationships. Granting all this, one may conclude that the power of the middle classes had everything to do with that of middle-class love. And if this contention holds true, one must also agree that middle-class authority rested in large part upon the authority that novels attributed to women and in this way designated as specifically female.

In demonstrating that the rise of the novel hinged upon a struggle to

say what made a woman desirable, then, I will be arguing that much more was at stake. I will consider this redefinition of desire as a decisive step in producing the densely interwoven fabric of common sense and sentimentality that even today ensures the ubiquity of middle-class power. It is my contention that narratives which seemed to be concerned solely with matters of courtship and marriage in fact seized the authority to say what was female, and that they did so in order to contest the reigning notion of kinship relations that attached most power and privilege to certain family lines. This struggle to represent sexuality took the form of a struggle to individuate wherever there was a collective body, to attach psychological motives to what had been the openly political behavior of contending groups, and to evaluate these according to a set of moral norms that exalted the domestic woman over and above her aristocratic counterpart. I am saying the female was the figure, above all else, on whom depended the outcome of the struggle among competing ideologies.

For no other reason than this could Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* represent a landowner's assault upon the chastity of an otherwise undistinguished servant girl as a major threat to our world as well as to hers. And Richardson could have Pamela resist such an assault only by confronting and then overthrowing the reigning notion of sexuality as articulated by Mr. B's subservient housekeeper. Scoffing at Pamela's claim that "to rob a person of her virtue is worse than cutting her throat," the housekeeper regards Mr. B's assaults as perfectly natural and states, "how strangely you talk! Are not the two sexes made for one another? And is it not natural for a gentleman to love a pretty woman? And suppose he can obtain his desires, is that so bad as cutting her throat?"<sup>1</sup> Clearly representing a minority position, Pamela prevails nevertheless through the novel's most harrowing scene where her master, with the help of the housekeeper, slips into bed and pins her naked body beneath him. Rather than yielding up even momentary satisfaction, this scene constitutes one of the least erotic bedroom encounters between male and female in literature:

he kissed me with frightful vehemence; and then his voice broke upon me like a clap of thunder. Now, Pamela, said he, is the dreadful time of reckoning come, that I have threatened—I screamed out in such a manner, as never anybody heard the like. But there was nobody to help me; and both hands were secured, as I said. Sure never poor soul was in such agonies as I. Wicked man! said I; O God! my God! this time! this one time! deliver me from this distress! or strike me dead this moment! (p. 213)

Pamela escapes with her virtue as she becomes a creature of words (she protests) and of silence (she swoons). Mr. B's attempt to penetrate a

servant girl's material body magically transforms that body into one of language and emotion, into a metaphysical object that can be acquired only through her consent and his willingness to adhere to the procedures of modern love. That this is indeed the Pamela Mr. B eventually desires calls into question the whole notion of sexuality on which the housekeeper's common sense had been based.

In opening the argument of this book, I can only suggest how such a transformation occurred on a mass basis and how it revised the entire surface of social life. The nature and extent of its historical impact is only implicit in the one scene from *Pamela* that does seem genuinely erotic. In this scene, we may observe the transfer of erotic desire from Pamela's body to her words. When Richardson at last allows Mr. B to have his way with the girl, erotic desire makes its brief reappearance in the novel, not on their wedding night, but at the climax of their courtship, as Mr. B forcibly takes possession of Pamela's letters:

Artful slut! said he, What's this to my question?—Are they [the letters] not *about* you?—If, said I, I must pluck them out of my hiding-place behind the wainscot, won't you see me?—Still more and more artful! said he—Is this an answer to my question?—I have searched every place above, and in your closet, for them, and cannot find them; so I *will* know where they are. Now, said he, it is my opinion they are about you; and I never undressed a girl in my life; but I will now begin to strip my pretty Pamela. (p. 245)

As he proceeds to probe her garters for a few more precious words, Pamela capitulates and, in a shower of tears, delivers up what he desires. Thus having displaced the conventionally desirable woman onto a written one, Richardson infuses the new body with erotic appeal. The pleasure she now offers is the pleasure of the text rather than those forms of pleasure that derive from mastering her body.

However inadequate this substitution may seem to us today, readers remain thoroughly enchanted by narratives in which a woman's virtue alone overcomes sexual aggression and transforms male desire into middle-class love, the stuff that modern families are made of. As the heirs to a novelistic culture, we are not very likely to question the whole enterprise. We are more likely to feel that the success of repeated pressures to coax and nudge sexual desire into conformity with the norms of heterosexual monogamy affords a fine way of closing a novel and provides a satisfactory goal for a text to achieve. Novels do not encourage us to doubt whether sexual desire already existed before the strategies were devised to domesticate it. Nor do novels often question the premise that such desire, if it is not so domesticated, constitutes the gravest danger—

and root of all other threats—to society. And I know of no major criticism of the novel which does not at some point capitulate to the idea that sexual desire exists in some form prior to its representation and remains there as something for us to recover or liberate. It is this dominant theory of desire, I believe, that authorizes domestic fiction and yet conceals the role such fiction played in modern history. More to the point, in ignoring the historical dimension of desire, this theory—at once psychological and literary—has left us no way of explaining why, at the inception of modern culture, the literate classes in England suddenly developed an unprecedented taste for writing for, about, and by women.

I know of no history of the English novel that can explain why women began to write respectable fiction near the end of the eighteenth century, became prominent novelists during the nineteenth century, and on this basis achieved the status of artists during the modern period. Yet that they suddenly began writing and were recognized as women writers strikes me as a central event in the history of the novel. Ian Watt's classic study *The Rise of the Novel* ties the popularity of such writers as Defoe and Richardson to an economic individualism and Puritan ethic they shared with a substantial portion of the new reading public. But Watt's historical explanation fails to consider why "the majority of eighteenth-century novels" were written by women. When it comes time to account for Jane Austen, historical explanations elude him, and he falls back on a commonplace claim: "the feminine sensibility was in some ways better equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships and was therefore at a real advantage in the realm of the novel."<sup>2</sup> Of late, it seems particularly apparent that such attempts to explain the history of the novel fail because—to a man—history is represented as the history of male institutions. Where women writers are concerned, this understanding of history leaves all the truly interesting questions unasked: Why the "female sensibility"? How "better equipped"? What "intricacies"? Whose "personal relationships"? Why an "advantage in the realm of the novel"? And, finally, how did all this become commonplace?

As if in response, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* at least attempts to account for a tradition of female writers. While Watt is concerned with just how fiction played to the interests of a changing readership, Gilbert and Gubar concentrate on the authors themselves and the conditions under which they wrote. They argue that women authors, in contrast with their male counterparts, had to manage the difficult task of simultaneously subverting and conforming to patriarchal standards.<sup>3</sup> But when understood within this gendered frame of reference, the conditions for women's writing appear to remain relatively

constant throughout history because the authors in question were women and because the conditions under which they wrote were largely determined by men. Thus, like Watt, Gilbert and Gubar virtually ignore the historical conditions that women have confronted as writers, and in so doing they ignore the place of women's writing in history. For Gilbert and Gubar, too, history takes place not in and through those areas of culture over which women may have held sway, but in institutions dominated by men. Because both these definitive histories of the novel presuppose a social world divided according to the principle of gender, neither of them can possibly consider how such a world came into being and what part the novel played in its formation. Yet these are the very questions we must consider if we want to explain why women became prominent authors of fiction during the nineteenth century in England. So long as we assume that gender transcends history, we have no hope of understanding what role women played—for better or worse—in shaping the world we presently inhabit.

To describe the history of domestic fiction, then, I will argue several points at once: first, that sexuality is a cultural construct and as such has a history; second, that written representations of the self allowed the modern individual to become an economic and psychological reality; and third, that the modern individual was first and foremost a woman. My argument traces the development of a specific female ideal in eighteenth and nineteenth century conduct books and educational treatises for women, as well as in domestic fiction, all of which often were written by women. I will insist that one cannot distinguish the production of the new female ideal either from the rise of the novel or from the rise of the new middle classes in England. At first, I will demonstrate, writing about the domestic woman afforded a means of contesting the dominant notion of sexuality that understood desirability in terms of the woman's claims to fortune and family name. But then, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, middle-class writers and intellectuals can be seen to take the virtues embodied by the domestic woman and to pit them against working-class culture. It took nothing less than the destruction of a much older concept of the household for industrialization to overcome working-class resistance. In time, following the example of fiction, new kinds of writing—sociological studies of factory and city, as well as new theories of natural history and political economy—established modern domesticity as the only haven from the trials of a heartless economic world. By the 1840s, norms inscribed in the domestic woman had already cut across the categories of status that maintained an earlier, patriarchal model of social relations.<sup>4</sup> The entire surface of social experience had come to mirror those kinds

of writing—the novel prominent among them—which represented the existing field of social information as contrasting masculine and feminine spheres.<sup>5</sup>

This book, which links the history of British fiction to the empowering of the middle classes in England through the dissemination of a new female ideal, necessarily challenges existing histories of the novel. For one thing, it insists that the history of the novel cannot be understood apart from the history of sexuality. In dissolving the boundary between those texts that today are considered literature and those that, like the conduct books, are not, my study shows that the distinction between literary and nonliterary was imposed retrospectively by the modern literary institution upon anomalous works of fiction. It shows as well that the domestic novel antedated—was indeed necessarily antecedent to—the way of life it represented. Rather than refer to individuals who already existed as such and who carried on relationships according to novelistic conventions, domestic fiction took great care to distinguish itself from the kinds of fiction that predominated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most fiction, which represented identity in terms of region, sect, or faction, could not very well affirm the universality of any particular form of desire. In contrast, domestic fiction unfolded the operations of human desire as if they were independent of political history. And this helped to create the illusion that desire was entirely subjective and therefore essentially different from the politically encodable forms of behavior to which desire gave rise.

At the same time and on the same theoretical grounds, my study of the novel challenges traditional histories of nineteenth century England by questioning the practice of writing separate histories for political and cultural events. Rather than see the rise of the new middle class in terms of the economic changes that solidified its hold over the culture, my reading of materials for and about women shows that the formation of the modern political state—in England at least—was accomplished largely through cultural hegemony. New strategies of representation not only revised the way in which an individual's identity could be understood, but in presuming to discover what was only natural in the self, they also removed subjective experience and sexual practices from their place in history. Our education does much the same thing when it allows us to assume that modern consciousness is a constant of human experience and teaches us to understand modern history in economic terms, even though history itself was not understood in those terms until the beginning of the nineteenth century. We are taught to divide the political world in two and to detach the practices that belong to a female domain from those that gov-

ern the marketplace. In this way, we compulsively replicate the symbolic behavior that constituted a private domain of the individual outside and apart from social history.

In actuality, however, the changes that allowed diverse groups of people to make sense of social experience as these mutually exclusive worlds of information constitute a major event in the history of the modern individual. It follows, then, that only those histories that account for the formation of separate spheres—masculine and feminine, political and domestic, social and cultural—can allow us to see what this semiotic behavior had to do with the economic triumph of the new middle classes. In effect, I am arguing, political events cannot be understood apart from women's history, from the history of women's literature, or from changing representations of the household. Nor can a history of the novel be historical if it fails to take into account the history of sexuality. For such a history remains, by definition, locked into categories replicating the semiotic behavior that empowered the middle class in the first place.

It is one thing to call for a study that considers the rise of the novel and the emergence of a coherent middle-class ethos as being one and the same as the formation of a highly elaborated form of female. It is quite another to account for phenomena such as writings for, by, and about women that have so far steadfastly resisted every effort of literary theory to explain their production and relevance to a moment in history. I have drawn upon the work of Michel Foucault—relying, in particular, on *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, as well as *Discipline and Punish*—to identify the problem inherent in all but a few discussions of sexuality in literature. Foucauldian histories break up the traditional modes of historical causality in order to focus our attention on the place of language and particularly writing in the history of modern culture, as well as on the very real political interests that are served when certain areas of culture—those I am calling sexuality—remain impervious to historical investigation. I want to stress the relationship between the sexual and the political. I want to isolate some major historical changes in this relationship because—as the studies of Watt and of Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate particularly well—it is very possible to situate women's writing in history without showing the political interests that such writing served, just as it is very possible to show the politics of women's writing without acknowledging how those interests changed radically with the passage of time. Foucault, on the other hand, makes it possible to consider sexual relations as the site for changing power relations between classes and cultures as well as between genders and generations.

He offers a way out of the problem plaguing the studies of Watt and

Gilbert and Gubar—the inability to historicize sexuality—by means of a double conceptual move. The first volume of his *History of Sexuality* makes sex a function of sexuality and considers sexuality as a purely semiotic process. Sexuality includes not only all those representations of sex that appear to be sex itself—in modern culture, for example, the gendered body—but also those myriad representations that are meaningful in relation to sex, namely, all the various masculine or feminine attributes that saturate our world of objects. Sexuality is, in other words, the cultural dimension of sex, which, to my way of thinking, includes as its most essential and powerful component the form of representation we take to be nature itself.<sup>6</sup> Thus we can regard gender as one function of sexuality that must have a history. My study of the novel will demonstrate that, with the formation of a modern institutional culture, gender differences—though one of many possible functions of sexuality—came to dominate the functions of generation and genealogy, which organized an earlier culture.

Most studies of the British novel more or less consciously acknowledge the difference between sex and sexuality, referent and representation. With almost flawless consistency, however, criticism of the novel has made this distinction only to imbed a modern truth in the referent. I find it difficult to think of a single study of the novel that does not posit an opposition between writing and desire in which desire, when written, loses at least some of its individuality, truth, purity, or power, which is nevertheless there for critics to recover. But Foucault does not accept this opposition. He asks us to think of modern desire as something that depends on language and particularly on writing. It is on this ground that his *History of Sexuality* assaults the tradition of thinking that sees modern sexuality as logically prior to its written representation. And, I should add, Gilbert and Gubar's approach to the novel resembles Watt's by positing a specific form of sexuality as natural, that is, as sex. Both studies assume this prior and essential form of sexuality is what authors subsequently represent or misrepresent (it is all the same) in fiction. It is as if their opposing accounts of the production of fiction have agreed to disagree on the relatively minor issue of whether writing operates on the side of culture to repress nature or, alternatively, brings us closer to the truth of nature. Either way sex is situated historically prior to sexuality. According to Foucault, however, sex neither was nor is already there to be dealt with in one way or another by sexuality. Instead, its representation determines what one knows to be sex, the particular form sex assumes in one age as opposed to another, and the political interests these various forms may have served.

Any representation of sex as something that has been misunderstood and must be known, something that has been repressed and must be liberated, Foucault would argue, itself operates as a component of sexuality. More than that, such representations give modern sexuality its particular political thrust, which produces rather than represses a specific form of sexuality. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Foucault has observed, the discovery of the fact of desire hidden within the individual prompted an extensive process of verbalization that effectively displaced an eroticism that had been located on the surface of the body. The discourse of sexuality saw such forms of pleasure as a substitution for some more primary, natural, and yet phantasmagorical desire. The discovery of this repressed sexuality thus provided justification for reading and interpreting sexual behavior wherever one found it, always with the Enlightenment motive of discovering truth and producing freedom, always consequently with the very different result of enclosing sex within an individual's subjectivity.

"The notion of repressed sex is not, therefore, only a theoretical matter," Foucault insists.

The affirmation of a sexuality that has never been more rigorously subjugated than during the age of the hypocritical, bustling, and responsible bourgeoisie is coupled with the grandiloquence of a discourse purporting to reveal the truth about sex, modify its economy with reality, subvert the law that governs it, and change its future.<sup>7</sup>

It is not to wag the finger at middle-class hypocrisy that Foucault represents modern sexuality as behaving in this apparently contradictory way. Instead, he would have us see how the modern tendency that opposes desire to its verbal representation reproduces the figure of repressed sexuality. Any attempt to verbalize a form of sexuality that supposedly has been repressed in fact reproduces the distinction between essential human nature and the aspects of individual identity that have been imposed upon us by culture. This distinction does not allow us to examine culture and nature as two mutually dependent constructs that are together a political function of culture. Foucault alone shifts the investigation of sexuality away from the nature of desire to its political uses. He rejects the opposition between desire and writing in order to consider modern desire as something that depends on writing. "The question I would like to pose," Foucault explains,

is not, Why are we repressed? but rather, Why do we say, with so much passion and so much resentment against our most recent past, against our present, and against ourselves, that we are repressed? By what spiral did

we come to affirm that sex is negated? What led us to show, ostentatiously, that sex is something we hide, to say it is something we silence? (pp. 8-9)

Foucault asks us, in other words, to understand repression at once as a rhetorical figure and as a means of producing desire.

According to the same way of thinking, writing actively conceals the history of sexuality by turning repression into a narrative form. The history so produced constitutes a myth of progressive enlightenment. According to the Foucauldian hypothesis, however, our thinking is most completely inscribed within middle-class sexuality when we indulge in this fantasy, for the repressive hypothesis ensures that we imagine freedom in terms of repression, without questioning the truth or necessity of what we become with the lifting of bans. When, on the other hand, we abandon the practice of putting knowledge in a domain of nature outside of and prior to representation, we stand a chance of avoiding the tautology inherent in the notion of repression. No longer assuming that, when written, desire loses some of its individuality, truth, purity, or power, we may no longer feel strangely compelled to discover the truth about desire. Instead, we may understand desire as inseparable from its representation and understand its representation, in turn, as part of political history. In Foucault's account of the triumph of middle-class culture, the discovery of sexual repression provides an entirely new basis for understanding the relationship between one individual and another. Following his example, we can say that modern sexuality (for example, the middle-class idea that desirable femaleness was femininity) gave rise to a new understanding of sex (as the female was defined first by Darwin and then by Freud). We can also say that the representation of the individual as most essentially a sexual subject preceded the economic changes that made it possible to represent English history as the narrative unfolding of capitalism. Thus what began chiefly as writing that situated the individual within the poles of nature and culture, self and society, sex and sexuality only later became a psychological reality, and not the other way around. Foucault makes us mindful of this inversion of the normal relationship between forms of desire and the writing that represents them when he refers to the whole apparatus for producing modern individualism as "the discourse of sexuality."

But in order to describe the formation and behavior of such a discourse of sexuality in England, one must, I believe, refine Foucault's productive hypothesis to include the issue of gender. A semiotic capable of explaining virtually any form of human behavior in fact depended above all else



on the creation of modern gender distinctions. These came into being with the development of a strictly female field of knowledge, and it was within this field that novels had to situate themselves if they were to have cultural authority. Even where poetry was concerned, the female ceased to represent the writers' muse and, with the Romantics, became instead a function of imagination that provided figurative language with a psychological source of meaning. And if a single cultural reflex could identify what was Victorian about Victorianism, and thus could isolate the moment when the new class system that distinguished landowner from capitalist and these from the laboring classes was securely entrenched, it was the insistence that a form of authority whose wellsprings were the passions of the human heart ultimately authorized writing. Therefore, while strategies of gender differentiation play little role in Foucault's writing, they must be considered paramount in a study that considers the history of the British novel as the history of sexuality.

My point is that language, which once represented the history of the individual as well as the history of the state in terms of kinship relations, was dismantled to form the masculine and feminine spheres that characterize modern culture. I want to show that a modern, gendered form of subjectivity developed first as a feminine discourse in certain literature for women before it provided the semiotic of nineteenth century poetry and psychological theory. It was through this gendered discourse, more surely than by means of the epistemological debate of the eighteenth century, that the discourse of sexuality made its way into common sense and determined how people understood themselves and what they desired in others. The gendering of human identity provided the metaphysical girders of modern culture—its reigning mythology. The popular concepts of subjectivity and sensibility resembled Locke's theory that human understanding developed through an exchange between the individual mind and the world of objects, an exchange that was mediated by language. But instead of a "soul"—Locke's word for what exists before the process of self-development begins—the essential self was commonly understood in terms of gender.<sup>8</sup> Conduct books for women, as well as fiction in the tradition of Richardson, worked within the same framework as Locke, but they constructed a more specialized and less material form of subjectivity, which they designated as female. If the Lockean subject began as a white sheet of paper on which objects could be understood in sets of spatial relations, then pedagogical literature for women mapped out a field of knowledge that would produce a specifically female form of subjectivity. To gender this field, things within the field itself had to be gendered. Masculine objects were understood in terms of their relative

economic and political qualities, while feminine objects were recognized by their relative emotional qualities. At the site of the household, family life, and all that was hallowed as female, this gendered field of information contested a dominant political order which depended, among other things, on representing women as economic and political objects.

Such a modification of Foucault allows one to see that sexuality has a history that is inseparable from the political history of England. To introduce their highly influential *Practical Education* in 1801, for example, Maria Edgeworth and her father Robert announce their departure from the curriculum that reinforced traditional political differences: "On religion and politics we have been silent because we have no ambition to gain partisans, or to make proselytes, and because we do not address ourselves to any sect or party."<sup>9</sup> In virtually the same breath, they assure readers: "With respect to what is commonly called the education of the heart, we have endeavored to suggest the easiest means of inducing useful and agreeable habits, well regulated sympathy and benevolent affections" (p. viii). Thus their proposal substitutes the terms of emotion and behavior for those of one's specific sociopolitical identity. Basing identity on the same subjective qualities that had previously appeared only in the curricula designed for educating women, the Edgeworths' program gives priority to the schoolroom and parlor over the church and courts in regulating all human behavior. In doing so, their educational program promises to suppress the political signs of identity. But, of course, to render insignificant the traditional way of naming and ranking individuals is a powerful political gesture in its own right. Perfectly aware of the political force to be exercised through education, the Edgeworths justify their program for cultivating the heart on the political grounds that it constituted a new and more effective method of policing. In their words, "It is the business of education to prevent crimes, and to prevent all those habitual propensities which necessarily lead to their commission" (p. 354).

To accomplish their ambitious political goal, the Edgeworths invoke an economy of pleasure in which the novel has been implicated since its inception in the late seventeenth century, an economy that cannot in fact be understood apart from the novel or from the criticism that grew up around the new fiction to censor and foster it simultaneously. To begin with, the Edgeworths accept the view that prevailed during the eighteenth century, which said fiction behaved subversively and misled female desire:

With respect to sentimental stories, and books of mere entertainment, we must remark, that they should be sparingly used, especially in the education of girls. This species of reading cultivates what is called the heart



prematurely, lowers the tone of the mind, and induces indifference for those common pleasures and occupations which, however trivial in themselves, constitute by far the greatest portion of our daily happiness. (p. 105)

But the same turn of mind recognizes the practical value of pleasure when it is harnessed and aimed at the right goals. Convinced that the "pleasures of literature" acted upon the reader in much the same way as the child's "taste for sugar-plums" (p. 80), the Edgeworths along with other forward-thinking educators began to endorse the reading of fiction that made social conformity seem necessary, if not entirely desirable. Although they name *Robinson Crusoe* as capable of leading immature minds astray, the Edgeworths also grant the book practical value. But they grant the book more value, curiously enough, for the very readers whom fiction most endangered: "To girls this species of reading cannot be as dangerous as it is to boys: girls must soon perceive the impossibility of their rambling about the world in quest of adventures" (p. 111). This is one of many statements that suggest how socialization was fixed to gender. It considers *Robinson Crusoe* educational for the expressed reason that women would never imagine undertaking Crusoe's economic adventures. There is also a strong possibility that early educational theorists recommended *Crusoe* over Defoe's other works because they thought women were likely to learn to desire what Crusoe accomplished, a totally self-enclosed and functional domain where money did not really matter. It was no doubt because Crusoe was more female, according to the nineteenth century understanding of gender, than either Roxana or Moll that educators found his story more suitable reading for girls than for boys of an impressionable age.

If the reading of fiction came to play an indispensable role in directing desire at certain objects in the world, it was not because such narratives as *Robinson Crusoe* administered a particularly useful dose of didacticism. Instead, I would like to pose the possibility that moral hegemony triumphed in nineteenth century England largely through consent rather than coercion; it was precisely because they were leisure-time reading that such books as *Robinson Crusoe* were important to the political struggle between the ruling classes and the laboring poor. In his study of the impact of Sunday schools on working-class culture during the nineteenth century, Thomas Walter Laqueur contends that it was through their manner of inculcating literacy and a hunger for books, not through their overt promotion of certain behavioral norms, that English Sunday schools ensured docility in regions where we would expect to find violent resistance to industrialization.<sup>10</sup> But these new forms of literacy seemed to intrude upon the cultural stage brandishing a double-edged sword. Education did not necessarily make newly impoverished laborers safe for an industrial-

izing world; it could in fact have made them extremely dangerous. If education helped to produce a more tractable working class, working-class radicalism was predicated on literacy too—that is, on political pamphlets, on alternative programs for education, and even on a literature that spoke to their needs and desires rather than to those of their employers. Thus, Laqueur concludes, literacy did not simply indoctrinate the poor in the values and practices that would make them fit to inhabit an industrial world. More importantly, the total appropriation of the time during which the poor carried on traditional collective activities was essential in disarming the subversive potential of working-class literacy. Laqueur reasons that Sunday schools became an effective means of socialization not because they taught the necessity of self-sacrifice and respect for authority, but because they offered recreational programs that occupied many of the idle hours when people gathered in their customary fashion and when political plans might otherwise have been hatched.

The same principle extends, I believe, to the reading of fiction. As education became the preferred instrument of social control, fiction could accomplish much the same purpose as the various forms of recreation promoted by Sunday schools. The period following 1750 saw a new effort to regulate the free time of children and, by extension, the free time of their parents. Removing the stigma from novel reading no doubt conspired with activities promoted by Sunday schools to combat historically earlier notions of self, of family, and of pleasure. To unregulated time and pleasure was attributed the possibility of undermining the political order, as if, in the words of one concerned citizen, idleness alone could "fill the land with villains, render property insecure, crowd our jails with felons, and bring poverty, distress and ruin upon families."<sup>11</sup> But chief among the practices that the new cast of educators sought to criminalize and then to suppress were drinking, violent sport, and profligacy. The reformist policies were particularly effective in controlling the discontented laborer because those aspects of working-class culture that, in purely moral terms, most threatened the laborer's hope for salvation were also the practices that best fostered political resistance.<sup>12</sup>

Allon White has argued persuasively that the successful effort to push carnival and popular culture to the margins of social life was related to the victorious emergence of specifically bourgeois practices and languages, which were reinflected within a framework where they indicated an individual's degree of socialization.<sup>13</sup> And the novel is implicated in this process. If the production of a specifically female curriculum was an important moment in our cultural history, then the inclusion of novels within the female curriculum was also significant. Until well into the

eighteenth century the reading of fiction was considered tantamount to seduction, but in the last decades of that century, certain novels were found fit to occupy the idle hours of women, children, and servants. At that point, the novel provided a means of displacing and containing long-standing symbolic practices—especially those games, festivities, and other material practices of the body that maintained a sense of collective identity. Certain novels in particular transformed all they contained into the materials of a gendered universe. And once they did so transform the signs of political identity, such signs could, as the Brontës' madwomen demonstrate, include forms of desire that challenged the norms distinguishing gender. Reading such works of fiction would still have the desirable effect of inducing a specific form of political unconscious.<sup>14</sup>

In formulating a theory of mass education in which fiction had a deceptively marginal role to play, the Edgeworths and their colleagues were adopting a rhetoric that earlier reformers had used to level charges of violence and corruption against the old aristocracy. They placed themselves in an old tradition of radical Protestant dissent, which argued that political authority should be based on moral superiority. At issue in the way that sexual relations were represented, according to Jacques Donzelot, "was the transition from a government of families to a government through the family."<sup>15</sup> Sexual relations so often provided the terms of argument that no representation of the household could be considered politically neutral. To contest the notion of a state that depended on inherited power, Puritan treatises on marriage and household governance represented the family as a self-enclosed social unit in whose affairs the state could not intervene. Against genealogy the treatises posited domesticity.<sup>16</sup> But in claiming sovereignty for the father over his home, they were not proposing a new form of political organization. According to Kathleen M. Davis, the Puritan doctrine of equality insisted only upon the difference of sexual roles in which the female was certainly subordinate to the male, and not upon the equality of the woman in kind. "The result of this partnership," Davis explains, "was a definition of mutual and complementary duties and characteristics." Gender was so clearly understood in oppositional terms that it could be graphically represented as such:<sup>17</sup>

<i>Husband</i>	<i>Wife</i>
Get goods	Gather them together and save them
Travel, seek a living	Keep the house
Get money and provisions	Do not vainly spend it
Deal with many men	Talk with few

<i>Husband</i>	<i>Wife</i>
Be "entertaining"	Be solitary and withdrawn
Be skillful in talk	Boast of silence
Be a giver	Be a saver
Apparel yourself as you may	Apparel yourself as it becomes you
Dispatch all things outdoors	Oversee and give order within

In representing the family as the opposition of complementary genders, Puritan tracts enclosed the domestic unit. If they wanted to cut it off from the genealogical tree of state and so use it to authorize the household as an independent and self-generated source of power, their moment had not yet arrived. The hegemonic potential of the model had yet to be realized at that point in time. For the Puritan household consisted of a male and female who were structurally identical, positive and negative versions of the same attributes. The female did not offer a competing form of political thinking.

Unlike the Puritan authors, the educational reformers of the nineteenth century could look back on a substantial body of writing that had represented the domestic woman in a way that authorized such a political alternative. Before it provided a common ideal for individuals who would otherwise see themselves in competition or else without any relationship at all, the household had to be governed by a form of power that was essentially female—that is, essentially different from that of the male and yet a positive force in its own right. Although certainly subject to political force, the domestic woman exercised a form of power that appeared to have no political force at all because it seemed forceful only when it was desired. It was the power of domestic surveillance. The husband who met the standards listed above passed into oblivion well before the aristocratic male ceased to dominate British political consciousness, but the domestic woman enjoyed a contrary fate. In the centuries intervening between our own day and that of the Puritan revolution, she was inscribed with values that addressed a whole range of competing interest groups and, through her, these groups gained authority over domestic relations and personal life. In this way, furthermore, they established the need for the kind of surveillance upon which modern institutions are based.

Indeed, the last two decades of the seventeenth century saw an explosion of writing that proposed to educate the daughters of numerous aspiring social groups.<sup>18</sup> The new curriculum promised to make these women desirable to men of a superior rank and in fact more desirable than women who had only their own rank and fortune to recommend them. The cur-

riculum aimed at producing a woman whose value resided chiefly in her femaleness rather than in traditional signs of status, a woman who possessed psychological depth rather than a physically attractive surface, one who, in other words, excelled in the qualities that differentiated her from the male. As femaleness was redefined in these terms, the woman exalted by an aristocratic tradition of letters ceased to appear so desirable. In becoming the other side of this new sexual coin, the aristocratic woman represented surface instead of depth, embodied material instead of moral value, and displayed idle sensuality instead of constant vigilance and tireless concern for the well-being of others. Such a woman was not truly female.

But it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the project of gendering subjectivity began to acquire the immense political influence it still exercises today. Around the 1830s, one can see the discourse of sexuality lose interest in its critique of the aristocracy as the newly organizing working classes became the more obvious target of moral reform. Authors suddenly took notice of social groups who had hardly mattered before. Reformers and men of letters discovered that politically aggressive artisans and urban laborers lacked the kind of motivation that characterized middle-class individuals. Numerous authors sought out the causes of poverty, illiteracy, and demographic change, not in the rapidly changing economic circumstances that had impoverished whole groups of people and torn their families asunder, but within those individuals themselves whose behavior was found to be at once promiscuous and insufficiently gendered. In analyzing the condition of the working classes, authors commonly portrayed women as masculine and men as effeminate and childlike. By representing the working class in terms of these personal deficiencies, middle-class intellectuals effectively translated the overwhelming political problem caused by rapid industrialization into a sexual scandal brought about by the worker's lack of personal development and self-restraint. Reformers could then step forward and offer themselves, their technology, their supervisory skills, and their institutions of education and social welfare as the appropriate remedy for growing political resistance.

In all fairness, as Foucault notes, the middle classes rarely imposed institutional constraints upon others without first trying them out on themselves. When creating a national curriculum, the government officials and educators in charge adopted one modeled on the educational theory that grew up around the Edgeworths and their intellectual circle, which can be considered the heir to the dissenting tradition.<sup>19</sup> It was basically the same curriculum proposed by eighteenth century pedagogues and reformers as the best way of producing a marriageable daughter. For one thing,

the new curriculum drew upon the female model in requiring familiarity with British literature. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Edgeworths were among those who had already determined that the program aimed at producing the domestic woman offered a form of social control that could apply to boys just as well as to girls. And by the mid-nineteenth century, the government was figuring out how to administer much the same program on a mass basis. In forming the conceptual foundation upon which the national curriculum was based, a particular idea of the self thus became commonplace, and as gendered forms of identity determined more and more how people learned to think of themselves as well as of others, that self became the dominant social reality.

Such an abbreviated history cannot do justice to the fierce controversies punctuating the institution of a standard curriculum in England. I simply want to locate a few sites where political history obviously converged with the history of sexuality as well as with that of the novel to produce a specific kind of individual, and I do so to suggest the political implications of representing these histories as separate narratives. As it began to deny its political and religious bias and present itself instead as a moral and psychological truth, the rhetoric of reform obviously severed its ties with an aristocratic past and took up a new role in history. It no longer constituted a form of resistance but distinguished itself from political matters to establish a specialized domain of culture where apolitical truths could be told. The novel's literary status hinged upon this event. Fiction began to deny the political basis for its meaning and referred instead to the private regions of the self or to the specialized world of art, but never to the use of words that created and still maintains these primary divisions within the culture. Favored among kinds of fiction were the novels which best performed the operations of division and self-containment that turned political information into the discourse of sexuality. These novels made the novel respectable, and it is significant that they so often were entitled with female names such as *Pamela*, *Evelina*, or *Jane Eyre*. With this transformation of cultural information came widespread suspicion of political literacy, and with it, too, a mass forgetfulness that there was a history of sexuality to tell.

In this way, the emergence and domination of a system of gender differences over and against a long tradition of overtly political signs of social identity helped to usher in a new form of state power. This power—the power of representation over the thing represented—wrested authority from the old aristocracy on grounds that a government was morally obliged to rehabilitate degenerate individuals rather than to maintain their subjection through force. After the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, it was clear

that the state's capacity for violence had become a source of embarrassment. Overt displays of force worked against legitimate authority just as they did against subversive factions. If acts of open rebellion had justified intervention into areas of society that the government had never had to deal with before, then the use of force on the part of the government gave credence to the workers' charges of oppression. The power of surveillance came into dominance at this moment, displacing the traditional uses of force. Like the form of vigilance that maintained an orderly household, this power did not create equality so much as trivialize the material signs of difference by translating all such signs into differences in the quality, intensity, direction, and self-regulatory capability of an individual's desire.

One could easily regard this history as yet another "just so" story were it not for the way it implicates literature and literacy in political history. Foucault's preoccupation with the power of "discourse" distinguishes his narrative from those of Marx and Freud, but the real targets of his anti-disciplinary strategies are the traditional historians who ignore the hegemony of which modern literature is only one function. It is certainly possible to take issue with the way in which he collapses such categories as "history," "power," "discourse," and "sexuality." It is also right to be troubled by his failure to mention those topics that seem most germane to his argument. In the case of "sexuality," for example, there is his virtual disregard for a mode of gender differentiation that enables one sex to dominate the other, just as, in his epic study of "discipline," we must ask where is there mention of ideology or of the collective activities that resisted it? Even though he explains the formation of institutions that exercise power through knowledge, and even though he takes steps to call those institutions into question by making the political power of writing visible as such, the history Foucault tells is nevertheless a partial one.

No history of an institution—whether that of prison, hospital, and schoolroom, as Foucault describes them, or of courts, houses of parliament, and marketplace, as more conventional historians prefer—can avoid the political behavior of the disciplinary model because these histories necessarily diminish the role of the subject in authorizing the forces that govern him. Moreover, such histories tend to ignore the degree to which forms of resistance themselves determine the strategies of domination. Thus we find, in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, that the dismembered body of the subject composing half the scene on the scaffold disappears as the modern penal institution closes around it. The same can be said of the body of the plague victim in Foucault's account of "the birth of the clinic."<sup>20</sup> The history of domination over the subject's material body

seems to come to an end as the state begins to control individuals through strategies of discourse rather than by means of physical violence. But to say that this body is no longer important to the history of domination does not mean that other cultural formations disappear. The panopticon, Foucault's most completely articulated figure of power, is incomplete in itself as a model of culture. It requires something on the order of "carnival," Mikhail Bakhtin's figure for all the practices that, with the growth of disciplinary institutions, were entirely cast out of the domain of culture.<sup>21</sup>

I think we need to create other ways of talking about resistance as well, for literary criticism too easily translates carnival—and all the material practices of the body that are tolerated within its framework—into the simple absence or inversion of normative structures. If one could allow for such heterogeneity—the overlapping of competing versions of reality within the same moment of time—the past would elude the linear pattern of a developmental narrative. In the model I am proposing, culture appears as a struggle among various political factions to possess its most valued signs and symbols.<sup>22</sup> The reality that dominates in any given situation appears to be just that, the reality that dominates. As such, the material composition of a particular text would have more to do with the forms of representation it overcame—in the case of domestic fiction, with its defiance of an aristocratic tradition of letters and, later on, with its repudiation of working-class culture—than with the internal composition of the text per se. I would pursue this line of thought one step further and say that the internal composition of a given text is nothing more or less than the history of its struggle with contrary forms of representation for the authority to control semiosis. In this respect, there is no inside to the text as opposed to the outside, no text/context distinction at all, though we must make such distinctions for purposes of copyright laws and traditional literary analyses.

The chapters that follow demonstrate this point by constructing a history of the domestic woman as she was represented, not only in the great domestic novels, but also in texts that never developed such literary pretensions. In reading these materials, I aim neither to discover forms of repression nor to perform acts of liberation, although my argument has a definite political goal. Rather, I am committed to a productive hypothesis. I want to show how the discourse of sexuality is implicated in shaping the novel, and to show as well how domestic fiction helped to produce a subject who understood herself in the psychological terms that had shaped fiction. I regard fiction, in other words, both as the document and as the agency of cultural history. I believe it helped to formulate the ordered

space we now recognize as the household, made that space totally functional, and used it as the context for representing normal behavior. In so doing, fiction contested and finally suppressed alternative bases for human relationships. In realizing this, one cannot—I think—ignore the fact that fiction did a great deal to relegate vast areas of culture to the status of aberrance and noise. As the history of this female domain is articulated, then, it will outline boldly the telling cultural move upon which, I believe, the supremacy of middle-class culture has rested. Such a history will reenact the moment when writing invaded, revised, and contained the household by means of strategies that distinguished private from social life and thus detached sexuality from political history. On the domestic front, perhaps even more so than in the courts and the marketplace, the middle-class struggle for dominance was fought and won.

While others have isolated rhetorical strategies that naturalize the subordination of female to male, no one has thoroughly examined the figure, or turn of cultural logic, that both differentiates the sexes and links them together by the magic of sexual desire. And if we simply assume that gender differentiation is the root of human identity, we can understand neither the totalizing power of this figure nor the very real interests such power inevitably serves. So basic are the terms “male” and “female” to the semiotics of modern life that no one can use them without to some degree performing the very reifying gesture whose operations we would like to understand and whose power we want to historicize. Whenever we cast our political lot in the dyadic formation of gender, we place ourselves in a classic double bind, which confines us to alternatives that are not really alternatives at all. That is to say, any political position founded primarily on sexual identity ultimately confirms the limited choices offered by such a dyadic model.<sup>23</sup> Once one thinks within such a structure, sexual relationships appear as the model for all power relationships. This makes it possible to see the female as representative of all subjection and to use her subjectivity as if it were a form of resistance. By inscribing social conflict within a domestic configuration, however, one loses sight of all the various and contrary political affiliations for which any given individual provides the site. This power of sexuality to appropriate the voice of the victim works as surely through inversion as by strict adherence to the internal organization of the model. It was doubtless because such a form of transgression affirmed their normative structure that middle-class intellectuals were the first to produce an extensive vocabulary of sexual crimes and perversions.

Still, there is a way in which this book owes everything to the very academic feminism it often seems to critique, for if reading women's

texts as women's texts were not now a professionally advantageous thing to do, there would be no call to write a history of this area of culture. However, in view of the fact that women writers have been included in the *Norton Anthology* as part of the standard survey of British literature and also as a collection by themselves, and in view of the fact that we now have male feminists straining to hop on the bandwagon, it is time to take stock. It is time to consider why the literary institution feels so comfortable with a kind of criticism that began as a critique of the traditional canon and the interpretive procedures the canon called forth. I can only conclude that in concerning itself with writing by and representations of women, literary criticism has not destabilized successfully the reigning metaphysics of sexuality. Clearly, by generating still more words on the subject, it has invigorated the discourse that sustains such a metaphysics. And yet I am convinced that one cannot tell the history of the British novel without, at the same time, considering the history of gender formation. I know this means that in the end I will have reified the themes whose reifying behavior it is my purpose to examine; I will have turned sex into sexuality too. But recognizing this, and with a view toward demonstrating how, at crucial points in its history, the novel used a thematics of gender to appropriate political resistance, I feel it is well worth the risk to compromise theory and erode the Olympian perspective on culture that such procedures as Foucault's occasionally allow one to enjoy. To remove oneself from the field under consideration is finally impossible, and attempting to do so does little to show how we might use the sexual clichés of this culture to imagine some other economy of pleasure, some genuinely subversive end.

If my study of the novel clarifies only one point, then, I would like it to demonstrate the degree to which modern culture depends on a form of power that works through language—and particularly the printed word—to constitute subjectivity. According to this premise, as purveyors of a specialized form of literacy, we invariably perpetuate the hegemony I have been describing. That we do so is especially true when we make novels into literary texts where psychosexual themes control the meaning of cultural information that might otherwise represent some contrary political viewpoint. When that happens, our interpretive procedures not only conceal the process by which the novels themselves reproduce modern forms of subjectivity. Our procedures also conceal the degree to which we think and write novelistically in order to make sense of the past and of cultures different from our own. In fact, we render ourselves unconscious of the political power we ourselves exercise whenever we represent sexuality as existing prior to its representation. Grounded on a meta-

physics that is yet to be widely recognized as such, and working through a highly sophisticated network of strategies by which the humanities and social sciences ground themselves on that rockbed of truth—human nature itself—sexuality continues to conceal the politics of writing subjectivity.

To avoid the female strategy of self-authorization, I will be describing the behavior of an emergent class from a historically later position which that class has empowered—from a position within that class and supported by it. I say this as a way of insisting that in constructing a history of female forms of power, I do not mean to appropriate a form of resistance but rather to reveal the operations of a class sexuality by which I have often found myself defined. At the risk of appearing dogmatic, I have at moments overstated my case and so violated the pluralistic ideology espoused by the best liberal element within my profession. I have adopted this tactic as a means of countering those who would emphasize woman's powerlessness—and we are certainly rendered powerless in specifically female ways—and therefore as a means of identifying for critical consideration that middle-class power which does not appear to be power because it behaves in specifically female ways. I will insist that those cultural functions which we automatically attribute to and embody as women—those, for example, of mother, nurse, teacher, social worker, and general overseer of service institutions—have been just as instrumental in bringing the new middle classes into power and maintaining their dominance as all the economic take-offs and political breakthroughs we automatically attribute to men. I am not, in other words, constructing a woman's history from the viewpoint of an oppressed or silent minority, for that would falsify what I do and what I am. In constructing a history of the modern woman, I want to consider the ways in which gender collaborates with class to contain forms of political resistance within liberal discourse. I want to use my power as a woman of the dominant class and as a middle-class intellectual to name what power I use as a form of power rather than to disguise it as the powerlessness of others.

To write an adequate history of domestic fiction, then, it seems to me that one must modify permanently what literary historians can say about history as well as about literature. Such scholars and critics collaborate with other historians, as well as with those who make it their business to appreciate high culture, when they locate political power primarily in the official institutions of state. For then they proceed as if there is no political history of the whole domain over which our culture grants women authority: the use of leisure time, the ordinary care of the body, courtship practices, the operations of desire, the forms of pleasure, gender differ-

ences, and family relations. As the official interpreters of the cultural past, we are trained, it appears, to deny the degree to which writing has concealed the very power it has granted this female domain. It is no doubt because each of us lives out such a paradox that we seem powerless to explain in so many words how our political institutions came to depend on the socializing practices of household and schoolroom. Yet, I contend, the historical record of this process is readily available in paperback. We call it fiction.

With this in mind, I have tried to defamiliarize the division of discourse that makes it so difficult to see the relationship between the finer nuances of women's feelings and the vicissitudes of a capitalist economy run mainly by men. My study identifies several places in cultural history where the one cannot be fully understood without the other. But I would still consider such an effort to be a frivolous demonstration of literary scholarship if it were not for the other people who are attempting to open new areas of culture to historical investigation and to provide some understanding of our own status as products and agents of the hegemony I am describing. In adopting various critical strategies, I have made no effort to be faithful to any particular theory. To my mind, such academic distinctions offer neither a trustworthy basis for making intellectual affiliations nor a solid basis for mounting an argument that concerns our own history. Rather than distinguish theory from interpretation and feminism from Marxism, deconstructionism, or formalism, I care mainly about those scholars and critics who have helped me to discover traces of the history of the present in several eighteenth and nineteenth century texts and to understand my own insights as part of the larger project now going on within those disciplines where individuals have undertaken the work of creating a new political literacy.



ders and generations. Thus it was not enough to represent combination as savagery and diseased desire. It was also necessary to establish a tradition of reading that would universalize modern desire in order to implant it within every individual as the very thing that makes him or her human.

The Brontës, in particular, represent a moment in the history of sexuality when one can observe this connection. First received as the work of Ellis Bell, an author of uncertain gender and an obvious affiliation with an earlier moment in cultural history, *Wuthering Heights* troubled its readers. But Charlotte Brontë knew just how to make her sister's novel more readable. She attached a "biographical notice" to the 1850 edition, allowing people to read the novel as the product of a fatally ill, mentally disturbed, and culturally primitive female. In the preface that accompanies the biographical notice, Charlotte transforms these features into those of a creative genius who is bisexual, at once ancient and childlike, possessed of demonic energy, yet mortally flawed and doomed to live on as a literary object.<sup>58</sup> If *Wuthering Heights* strikes us as a self-enclosed text with a curiously private system of meaning, this is not due to the author's estrangement, we may assume, but rather to a tradition of reading that compulsively repeats Charlotte's initial gesture of textual enclosure.

## 5

### Seduction and the Scene of Reading

"I was walking about in a town which I did not know. I saw streets and squares which were strange to me. Then I came into a house where I lived, went to my room, and found a letter from Mother lying there. She wrote saying that as I had left home without my parents' knowledge she had not wished to write to me to say that Father was ill. 'Now he is dead, and if you like you can come.'"

SIGMUND FREUD, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*

One day, a boy arranged such a "feminine" scene, with wild animals as intruders, and I felt that uncasiness which I assume often betrays to an experimenter what his innermost expectations are. And, indeed, on departure and already at the door, the boy exclaimed, "There is something wrong here," came back, and with an air of relief arranged the animals along a tangent to the circle of furniture.

ERIK H. ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*

It may be with some regret that we feel the passion depart as the first generation of lovers dies out of *Wuthering Heights* or when a much subdued Rochester reappears in *Jane Eyre* without his hand, eye, and lunatic wife, but there is no question that these figures of desire have become obsolete. The circumstances in which we find them at the end of these novels tells us that such manifestations of sensuality may be regarded with nostalgia but not wished back into being. For the kinship rules of an earlier culture reside on a different plane from social experience and the language that represents it. But even though they exist in the memories of certain individuals strictly as symbolic phenomena, the lovers are no less real. Each is at once the fact and figure of otherwise nonexistent and inexplicable experiences such as Lockwood's dream, Jane's night in the red-room, the eerie circumstances of Heathcliff's death, and the preternatural voice that calls Jane back to Rochester. In each case, past family



relations reappear as uncanny phenomena that make some unintelligible claim upon the present. Detached from their moment in history, these figures appear to represent the desires of the individual before whom they appear. Thus the Brontës call up the ghosts of the history of sexuality to represent a domain of passion that seems to well up in opposition to the contemporary conventions of courtship and kinship relations. To be internalized and made safe for polite readers, historically earlier sexual practices are discovered in dreams, hallucinations, and unfulfilled wishes that conflict with the conduct of sexual relationships in the present. In the hands of the Brontës and other sensation novelists, the history of sexuality becomes the stuff of individual neuroses.

Repression in the Brontës' fiction operates, I am suggesting, as a trope for turning the materials of history into a representation of consciousness, specifically the history of sexuality, so that fiction may transform earlier sexual relations into forms of subjectivity that are ever so much more comprehensive and complex. And if, as I believe is the case, the novel contains the history of sexuality within it, then its own history—the history of fiction—is displaced along with that “other” history. Given the omnivorous behavior I am attributing to the novel, there is very little cultural material that cannot be included within the feminine domain. Consequently, there is very little political information that cannot be transformed into psychological information. This chapter will discuss the implications of the embedding of history within subjectivity as first enacted in fiction and then passed on into the modern institutions responsible for reifying that notion of subjectivity which women were supposed to possess and which novels were supposed to disseminate.

This chapter will suggest how the trope of repression creates conditions for communication that maintain a certain form of social contract. As the individual reads what is outside, he or she appears to be revealing what is inside and receiving, in turn, some liberating or therapeutic benefit. This is even true of Jane's experience in the red-room which can be taken as the unleashing of rage at her aunt and the cause for her subsequently being sent away to school. Communication in this event is not so much an encounter between self and other as it is a self-confrontation. I will argue that the political relations governing the scene of reading as imagined in the Brontës' fiction are the very same political relations that govern the scene of seduction as it was defined by Richardson and reproduced wherever political relations may be figured out as a sexual contract.

The communication situation established by seduction is one where the female subject desires to be what the other desires her to be. To relinquish

the power of self-definition is the whole objective of seduction, as *Pamela* demonstrates. But if the woman relinquishes the power to discover a self that she believes society considers to be her true self, then the distinction between seduction and education is rhetorical. If seduction becomes, once again, the strategy that the dominant class sets to work through its institutions, and if these institutions speak with moral as well as political authority, then Pamela's resistance can no longer be virtuous; it becomes, by definition, neurotic. On this basis, I will argue that a therapeutic contract underlies all modern institutions and particularly those institutions most responsible for domesticating culture, that is, the psychotherapeutic and literary institutions that actively maintain a hermeneutics of the gendered self over their respective domains of behavior and writing.

### The Woman's Museum: *Jane Eyre*

Before turning to the relationship between gender and power in a modern information-based culture, I would like to linger for a moment over a few scenes in *Jane Eyre*. These scenes identify for readers the nature of the text they are encountering. Such self-reflexivity always identifies the female as the one with the power to determine the meaning of words and things, a power capable in certain instances of changing the nature of the words and things themselves. In one scene, Jane enters Thornfield Hall for the first time to repeat the same gesture of cultural “penetration” that Richardson enacts through Pamela. When Pamela enters an aristocratic manor house—although, to be sure, a middle-class version of an aristocratic manor house—she exposes the secrets of another class sexuality to moral examination. But it is definitely a different order of country house that Jane Eyre enters a century later. Jane initially encounters

A snug, small room; a round table by a cheerful fire; an armchair high-backed and old-fashioned, wherein sat the neatest imaginable little elderly lady, in widow's cap, black silk gown, and snowy muslin apron . . . ; nothing in short was wanting to complete the beau ideal of domestic comfort. A more reassuring introduction for a new governess could scarcely be conceived: there was no grandeur to overwhelm, no stateliness to embarrass; and then, as I entered, the old lady got up, and promptly and kindly came forward to meet me.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Jane finds the inside of the house to be thoroughly lettered. It is a place that has already been colonized by the conduct books as well as by novels like those Austen wrote. What is this, in fact, if not a scene from

one of those novels: enclosed, familiar, "reassuring," where "nothing in short was wanting"?

In writing *Northanger Abbey*, Austen appears to have put the past safely in the past. She teaches the heroine of her first novel to understand the excesses of patriarchal culture as a feature of fiction and as the undisciplined imaginations of women, not as a social reality. Her heroine learns, to her great embarrassment, that manor houses where libertine lords might control the bodies of women no longer have any place in the social reality of England:

Remember the country and age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you—Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighborhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and papers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?<sup>2</sup>

The terrors of aristocratic power have given way to ones that are less terrible and more effective, as Austen represents a social world regulated by surveillance or, in her words, "voluntary spies." What Brontë does in the pages following Jane's arrival at Thornfield, then, is to reopen the paranoid spaces within an earlier manor house that Austen had panelled over with the modern version of English common sense. Brontë's use of such material is not at all like Richardson's use, however. She brings this archaic material back into fiction precisely because it is archaic. As such, it cannot represent the actual public and social conditions of Brontë's time. It can only represent a private and psychological reality. Although infused with the demonic power that Richardson and Radcliffe had attributed to aristocratic culture, the rooms in Rochester's house are nevertheless "of proportions not vast, though considerable; a gentleman's manor-house, not a nobleman's seat" (p. 86). The rooms therefore hold the materials for a drama that is not only highly individual but also utterly commonplace.

A century before, conduct books for women turned the objects and personnel of the household into the signs and symbols of the woman who oversaw them and whose taste and sense of duty they could not help but communicate. The conduct books also created a curriculum of texts—bits and pieces of the native English cultural past—held together by cer-

tain textualizing strategies alone. Only such an antiquarian array of texts, we should recall, and only an array that was cast in psychological terms by specific procedures of interpretation, could ensure the production of a female sensibility. But where the conduct books of the eighteenth century constructed a gendered ideal of normalcy, the Brontës' fiction supplements the standardized body of female knowledge with strange and occult information. This information implies a self that is deeper than and essentially different from the self that has already been written. Each room within Thornfield Hall is a familiar site to readers of fiction, and each is a different citation; all the rooms are brought together in a single house of fiction by no principle other than that of Jane's textualizing eye. There is "the long and matted gallery" that concludes in "slippery steps of oak," a library whose "volumes of light literature, poetry, biography, travels, a few romances" seem to promise "an abundant harvest of entertainment and information" (p. 90), a dining room "with purple chairs and curtains, a Turkey carpet, walnut-panelled walls, one vast window rich in stained glass, and a lofty ceiling, nobly moulded," and a drawing room whose exotic appointments strike Jane as those of "a fairy place." It was, she says, "a very pretty drawing room, and within it a boudoir, both spread with white carpets" (p. 91). Rooms seem to open into rooms within rooms to suggest a capability for infinite interior expansion.

In fact, it is fair to say that Brontë composes Jane's autobiography out of a series of such rooms. Consequently, she bonds domestic space to the woman who inhabits it in a way that had never been so represented before. The Brontës' novels deal in a variety of spaces—rooms within mansions—that do not in fact belong together in the same text. This is not because they are, like the various places in a novel such as *Mansfield Park*, incompatible in socioeconomic terms. Rather, they represent historically discontinuous households. For every Thrushcross Grange, there is a Wuthering Heights. When Monsieur Paul purchases a thoroughly domesticated space for himself and Lucy Snowe, the forbidding chambers of Madame Walravens spring into view. The tenant of Wildfell Hall has a regency manor house in her past and one that is thoroughly purged of the past in her future. When we encounter Mrs. Fairfax snugly ensconced as if in an Austen parlor, then, we ought to know that she is in but one room in a house of many mansions that open up within one another to incorporate new cultural materials within the private world.

The Brontës use these rooms to represent undiscovered territories within the self that antedate the known and novelistically represented. Thus well before she discovers the attic room that imprisons Rochester's first wife,

Jane discovers places in the house that no longer provide a setting for the practices of daily life. She finds "some of the third-story rooms, though dark and low, were interesting from their air of antiquity." In all these rooms are the materials of other writing, deliberately excluded from the parlor world by Austen, but taken back into the novel by Brontë and put to new purposes:

The furniture once appropriated to the lower apartments had from time to time been removed here, as fashions changed; and the imperfect light entering by their narrow casements showed bedsteads of a hundred years old; chests in oak or walnut, looking, with their strange carvings of palm branches and cherubs' heads, like types of the Hebrew ark; rows of venerable chairs, high-backed and narrow; stools still more antiquated, on whose cushioned tops were yet apparent traces of half-effaced embroideries, wrought by fingers that for two generations had been coffin-dust. All these relics gave to the third story of Thornfield Hall the aspect of a home of the past: a shrine of memory. (p. 92)

These "relics" constitute a kind of residue of daily life—and of the novel—that history renders obsolete, but for which women and novelists eventually find new uses. Later in this chapter, for example, I will show how this material is used to represent the repressed consciousness of hysterical women. Thus containing the debris of culture, domestic culture as Brontë represents it has all the qualities of a museum.

I have in mind such a museum as the Victoria and Albert where objects are quite deliberately arranged according to the strangest mix of categories, not unlike the hodgepodge of periods, genres, modes, motifs, materials, themes, and schools that characterized the female curricula of the eighteenth century, and not unlike our modern literary histories, which sort out and assemble a canon according to a similar principle. Within this particular museum, the march of history is nowhere so visible as in a series of rooms—mainly parlors and bedrooms—where the furniture has been collected from the various periods of British history. The museum effectively conceals the human effects of the Empire within the very structure organized by its acquisitive strategies, much as the apparent randomness of Dickens' junk shops conceals the individual lives that lie in fragments there. The establishment of such museums in England was, as Francis Sheppard points out, a practice peculiar to the nineteenth century: "This was the age of the foundation of the National Gallery in 1824 (in Pall Mall, until its removal to Trafalgar Square in 1837), of the National Portrait Gallery in 1856 and of the South Kensington Museum in 1857, from which later developed the Science Museum and the Victoria and

Albert Museum."<sup>3</sup> These museums, Raymond Williams explains, were among the many institutions "representing a critical phase in the commercial organization of popular culture."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the mid-1800s saw a number of institutional developments. In addition to the beginning of public museums in 1845, there were limited provisions in 1850 for public libraries and public parks. According to Williams, "The fierce controversy surrounding these innovations (from the charges of extravagance to the anxious pleas that the working people must be 'civilized') tends to drop away, in our minds, according to subsequent interpretations." The underlying cause for this act of forgetting is what Williams calls "the selective tradition," which effects changes in the way the past is recalled by breaking up "a single story, though one of great complexity and conflict," into separate histories with different principles of causality.<sup>5</sup>

If one of the most persuasive arguments for the official institutions of culture was, as Williams claims, launched on the grounds that culture was an effective means of civilizing the working class, it is terribly ironic that, as Sheppard notes, "few if any of these places were open on Sundays—the British Museum, for example, not until 1896." "Their use," Sheppard continues, "was therefore restricted to persons of leisure, or (to quote the regulations of the British Museum in 1810) to 'persons of decent appearance.'"<sup>6</sup> But containment and reorganization of culture for purposes of public display were probably not meant to have the effect of stratifying people according to their access to culture. It is more likely that the intent behind the containment of culture was not so much to exclude anyone in particular as to recontextualize certain areas of culture. Even today these museums are places where the relics of the historical past have become as so many household objects, detached from their economic origins and fit to keep only the most polite company. It is in this respect that I find Charlotte Brontë's house of culture particularly interesting.

In the third story of Thornfield Hall, the past is used to fill several rooms that, having no apparent domestic utility, seem superfluous. Jane asks, "'Do the servants sleep in these rooms?'" To which the obliging Mrs. Fairfax replies, "'No; they occupy a range of smaller apartments to the back; no one ever sleeps here'" (p. 93). In these rooms, one encounters neither physical nor even metaphysical nature, neither body nor soul. According to Brontë, what one finds in these rooms is a cultural past that—like Freud's "uncanny"—refuses to stay in the past. Thus we find Jane Eyre musing on the stuff in these rooms as on a "shrine of memory":

I liked the hush, the gloom, the quaintness of these retreats in the day; but I by no means coveted a night's repose on one of those wide and heavy beds: shut in, some of them, with doors of oak; shaded, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and strangest human beings,—all which would have looked strange, indeed, by the pallid gleam of moonlight. (p. 92)

Resembling the room where Lockwood encounters the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*, the rooms in the third story provide the site where the day and night of conscious experience may be distinguished. Here, Fuseli-like figures that can originate in art alone challenge the distinctions between vegetable, animal, and human categories by defamiliarizing each of them. But this obsolete and grotesque art, in challenging nature's most basic distinctions, does not point to some supernatural presence. Although Mrs. Fairfax explains, "one would almost say that, if there were a ghost at Thornfield Hall, this would be its haunt," it is likely that Brontë only raises the possibility of an intrusive supernaturalism in order to cancel it out: "So I think: you have no ghost, then," Jane replies. And it is just as likely that in cancelling out such use of historically earlier material, Brontë erases its history. For when Mrs. Fairfax confirms that no ghost is known to inhabit the rooms in question, Jane inquires further, "Nor any traditions of one? no legends or ghost stories?" and Mrs. Fairfax replies in terms that call attention to the absence of history: "I believe not. And yet it is said the Rochesters have been rather a violent than a quiet race in their time: perhaps, though, that is the reason they rest tranquilly in their graves now" (p. 93).

I have described at length Jane's encounter with the various rooms in Thornfield Hall because they not only provide a model of the novel itself but also express the link between the history of sexuality and that of literature. Brontë uses the third-story rooms in particular to tell the reader precisely what has been done to the past to make a Victorian novel; her description of these rooms explains what the novel had to do to enter the domain of literature; and it records a change in the notion of what literature was, a change effected by the novel that in turn enabled the novel to enter that cultural domain. Brontë's fiction represents writing as a reality in its own right. She deliberately brings alien cultural materials within a domestic framework and destroys their cultural otherness, making it impossible for one to use them to imagine another period in time and another political reality. As the author of this world of relics, Brontë sets herself in the position of the bricoleur, a trashman of sorts, who embodies the power to break down a cultural text into components that can be used

to construct a whole new system of relationships. In this way, the "extra" rooms in Thornfield resemble an attic whose decontextualized objects await usage that will miraculously endow them with value. Such a space within culture allows change; it allows old information to permeate a self-enclosed text and become new information. Over such a space in middle-class cultures the woman is symbolically in charge, since she is the one who supervises the objects of the household. Presumably she is also the one who determines what things have value. The antique acquires its value as it is dusted off and restored to the household where it retains some of what Walter Benjamin calls "cult value." If, as he says of early photographs, "the cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture," then the cult of remembrance of the old manor house offers such a refuge for the cult of the old aristocracy. Some of the mystery of the old aristocracy clings onto the cultural debris one finds in the rooms of Thornfield Hall and makes the objects of the past appear all the more mysterious because they cannot be reproduced in a middle-class world.<sup>7</sup>

Jane has had this power to transform cultural objects and to give them new life since the beginning of the novel. In the first chapter, such a transformation begins when she reads *Bewick's History of British Birds*. Self-conscious of the process, she describes the plates portraying arctic birds: "Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float through children's brains, but strangely impressive" (p. 6). Of another plate Jane says, "I cannot tell what sentiment haunted the quite solitary churchyard"; in turning to another, she describes "two ships becalmed on a torpid sea" as "marine phantoms"; and as if to destabilize the referential world still further, she tells us that "each picture told a story, mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings" (p. 6). Chapters later, the material she has internalized reappears in paintings that were done "in the last two vacations I spent at Lowood, when I had no other occupation" (p. 109). Worth noting here is how different her paintings are from Emma's painting of Harriet Smith, for Jane's representations do not pretend to represent something in the world of objects at all. When Rochester asks, "Where did you get your copies?" she replies without hesitation, "Out of my head" (p. 109). As if to reinforce the nature of the transformation that her narrative is continuously making, then, Brontë has Rochester inquire further about this "head": "Has it other furniture of the same kind within?" (p. 110). Thus Jane proceeds to translate into words what she had translated from mind into paint:

These pictures were in water-colours. The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground; or, rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam: its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems. (p. 110)

We are certainly supposed to recognize the "subjects" that Jane says had "risen vividly on my mind" as the images of *Bewick's History of British Birds* come back to life as figments of imagination rather than imitations of nature. Natural history, ostensibly observed, then written, and finally read, finds its way into Jane's psychic life and onto her canvas where it provides a language for otherwise inarticulate desires.

But these images do not observe the conventional categories of emotional life after undergoing various transformations. In borrowing content from new cultural sources, Brontë allows content to intrude—as in the paintings—and to modify form. Jane describes the very act of painting as "one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known." At the same time, she claims to have been "tormented by the contrast between my idea and my handiwork: in each case I had imagined something which I was quite powerless to realise" (p. 111). In having her heroine say this, Brontë has her lay claim to the angst of a Romantic poet, and a good deal of critical ink has been spent in demonstrating that Charlotte Brontë herself should be understood in terms of that role. But I prefer to think that Brontë inserted these verbal paintings into Jane's narrative as a way of displaying the qualities of mind that have the power to make an otherwise unattractive governess so desirable to a man like Rochester. The heightened state of mind in which pleasure and torment are blended is not that of a professional poet. It is the mental state of a schoolgirl who finds herself with "nothing else to do" (p. 111). Thus Jane begins a metacommentary on her works by saying "first, I must premise that they are nothing wonderful" (p. 110). The defamiliarized bits of culture that intrude into Jane's narrative as the images in paintings, books, and dreams detach these images from any referent in the world and endow them with another kind of meaning that partially realizes the inchoate motions of mind. Consequently, the only history that culture comes to tell in Brontë's fiction is the history of a cultural transformation from mind to visible form to words, a history of the self and of its language. Like Richardson and Austen, Brontë is interested both in the interstices between the official ceremonies of life and in representing the activities of the female mind turned in upon itself during leisure hours.

But how different a mind this is from Emma's, and how different the

way it behaves when it is not otherwise occupied! Emma's paintings are only partially realized too, but this is because she is too busy with words to complete a painting, not because she experiences emotions for which there is no adequate medium of expression. In Brontë's novel, on the other hand, words summon up visual images which point to territories within the self that are beyond the scope of verbal representation. These images seem to break into the textual surface maintained by Jane's unrelenting moral superiority over all other characters and over the reader as well. They indicate a lack of control on her part that invites sexually subversive interpretations.

### Modern Men: *Shirley* and the Fuegians

But these images are composed of culture and ultimately serve to express deviant desires in a manner that allows Jane to contain and control such desires. Consequently, the images ultimately provide Brontë with the means of controlling the reader as well. In fact, this is a strategy that carries over from the Brontës to other Victorian authors whose narratives tend to turn into pictures as well, forming hypostatic images in which the materials of narrative—as in the genre paintings and monuments that also characterize Victorian culture—are already interpreted. That is to say, these visual images control the response to materials contained within them by shaping those materials into conventional figures that express various emotions—a careworn governess, a young woman cast out of her father's house, a dog in mourning beside his dead master's shoes, Ophelia drowned. Few materials from life or literature proved capable of resisting the emblematic strategies of Victorian art. In producing what is called a "popular culture," I am suggesting, such art developed ways of suppressing the explanatory logic of English cultural competence—Austen's common sense—as it was spoken and written by people with ordinary literacy. This art developed an iconography of subjectivity that could be transported from one text to another and extended across media. Considered in relation to these other uses of the visual, the images in *Jane Eyre* appear, not as the primary process thinking they are sometimes taken to be, but as metalanguage or strategies of textuality that control the very framework in which reading takes place. They control the identity of the reader by making one an object of knowledge to oneself in startling new ways.

Written in 1849 only two years after *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* is known as Charlotte Brontë's most explicitly political novel and one of several less

## Notes

### Introduction: The Politics of Domesticating Culture, Then and Now

1. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958), pp. 111. Citations of the text are to this edition.
2. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 57.
3. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). See especially pp. 45–92.
4. By “the patriarchal model,” I mean specifically the historical phenomenon that linked the political authority of the father over the household to that of the king in a mutually authorizing relationship. On this point, for example, see Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1975) and Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 239–40.
5. I draw here on David Musselwhite’s argument which implicitly challenges such notions of the politics of the novel as Bakhtin articulates in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). Rather than view the novel as a form that—like carnival—resisted hegemony, Musselwhite argues that the novel appropriates symbolic practices that would otherwise behave as forms of resistance. I intend to suggest that the politics of the novel are determined, on the one hand, by the genre’s tendency to suppress alternative forms of literacy and to produce the homogenized discourse we know as polite standard English. I will push this argument further and suggest that, on the other hand, the novel’s politics depend on how we use the genre today. In writing this book, I am assuming that one may expose the operations of the hegemony by reading the novel as the history of those operations. If there is any truth in this claim, then in adopting the novel’s psychologizing strategies, one only perpetuates the great nineteenth century project that suppressed political consciousness. David Musselwhite, “The Novel as Narcotic,” *1848: The Sociology of Literature* (Colchester, England: University of Essex, 1978), pp. 208–209.



6. In this respect, I take issue with critics whose discussion of sexuality is grounded in nature. For example, Jeffrey Weeks, in objecting to Foucault, insists that "discourse is not the only contact with the real." *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), pp. 10–11. To refute Foucault, however, he relies on the very strategies that Foucault identifies as constituting the discourse of sexuality. Weeks nevertheless tries to cut the Gordian knot which a Foucauldian understanding of sexuality presents: "Robert Padgug has recently written that 'biological sexuality is the necessary precondition for human sexuality. But biological sexuality is only a precondition, a set of potentialities which is never unmediated by human reality.' That sums up the fundamental assumption of this work" (p. 11, italics mine). Along with Padgug and others, Weeks invokes a biological basis for sexuality which is trans-cultural and outside of history, although, admittedly, "never unmediated by human reality." Along with Foucault, I would argue that the difference between nature and culture is always a function of culture, the construction of nature being one of culture's habitual tropes of self-authorization. And I would ask if the gendered body belongs to a nature that is beyond culture, as Weeks seems to assume, then why was it not until relatively recently that the difference between male and female came to dominate representations of the biological body. Writing about seventeenth century gynecology, for example, Audrey Eccles notes that "anatomically" it was "held there was virtually no difference between the sexes, the man's penis and testicles being exactly analogous to the uterus and ovaries." *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 26. Particularly in a culture that mythologizes sex by suppressing its political dimension, the idea of natural sex, it seems to me, poses a contradiction in terms that is without doubt the purest form of ideology.

7. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 8. Citations of the text are to this edition.

8. In using the term "soul," Locke invokes the metaphysics of an earlier theocentric culture, but he does so in order to decenter that metaphysics and provide a material basis for individual consciousness. "I see no reason," he claims, "to believe that the soul thinks before the senses have furnished it with ideas to think on; and as those are increased and retained, so it comes, by exercise, to improve its faculty of thinking in the several parts of it; as well as, afterwards, by compounding those ideas, and reflecting on its own operations, it increases its stock, as well as facility in remembering, imagining, reasoning, and other modes of thinking." *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, vol. I (New York: Dover, 1959), p. 139. Locke therefore retains the term of an earlier metaphysics, but he uses it to describe subjectivity as a mode of production exactly analogous to the development of private property. It is fair to say, further, that when "soul" is supplanted by gender as the source and supervisor of the individual's development, the whole notion of subjectivity is no less metaphysical than it is in Locke's ungendered representation. The metaphysical basis for human identity—and the role of language in self-production—is simply less apparent as such.

9. Maria Edgeworth and Robert L. Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, vol. II (London, 1801), p. ix. Citations of the text are to this edition.

10. Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780–1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

11. Laqueur, p. 229.

12. In recounting the growth of restrictive laws on alehouses and the attempts to regulate leisure time, Peter Clark has written, "In 1776 John Disney blamed the spread of popular disturbances on 'unnecessary and ill-timed' assemblies in drinking houses. The same year Oxfordshire landowners called for stern measures against vagrants and disorderly alehouses, while soon after the parish vestry at Terling in Essex proclaimed that 'alehouses are the common resort of the idle and dissolute' and went on to impose a strait-jacket of controls on the village's solitary establishment." *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200–1830* (London: Longman, 1983), p. 254.

13. Allon White, "Hysteria and the End of Carnival: Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis," *Semiotica*, 54 (1985), 97–111.

14. Fredric Jameson argues that it is necessary for criticism to abandon "a purely individual, or merely psychological, project of salvation," in order to "explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural objects as socially symbolic acts." *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 20. In invoking Jameson's concept from time to time, I will stress that the political unconscious is no less historical than any other cultural phenomenon. My study implicates the rise of the novel in the production of a specific form of political unconscious that suppressed the inherently political nature of kinship relations, for one thing, and of representations of women for another. Pre-Enlightenment authors seem to have been acutely aware of the politics of courtship and family relations. Removing these areas of culture from the domain of politics was a self-conscious feature of eighteenth and nineteenth century fiction. But the history of such semiotic process is one that our modern notion of literature systematically erases. For purposes of this study, I am particularly interested in how domestic fiction helped repress the politics of sexuality as it concealed its own political operations and how, in so doing, it differentiated itself from other fiction to earn literary status for fiction.

15. Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979), p. 92.

16. For a discussion of the paternalism that emerged in opposition to patriarchy in seventeenth century Puritan writing, see Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986), especially the chapter entitled "Family Rites." In describing the alternative to patriarchy that arose at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century in aristocratic families, Randolph Trumbach opposes the term "patriarchy" to the term "domesticity," by which he refers to the modern household. This form of social organization is authorized by internal relations of gender and generation rather than by way of analogy to external power relations between



monarch and subject or between God and man. *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 119–63.

17. Kathleen M. Davis, "The Sacred Condition of Equality—How Original were Puritan Doctrines of Marriage?" *Social History*, 5 (1977), 570. Davis quotes this list from John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godly Forme of Householde Government* (London, 1614).

18. See, for example, Patricia Crawford, "Women's Published Writings 1600–1700," in *Women in English Society 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 211–81.

19. Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education 1780–1870* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), pp. 1–62.

20. In elaborating the scene on the scaffold, Foucault pays close attention to the dismembered body of the criminal in the first two chapters of *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979). However, the material body disappears once Foucault moves into the modern period and power works not upon the body so much as through the penetration and inscription of the subject as subjectivity. The body on the scaffold continues on in Foucauldian discourse as if it were another body, a body of knowledge, and that of an entirely different order of subject—the patient in the clinic. But in fact, as Laqueur has shown, the history of the material body does not end here. The position of the criminal on the scaffold in fact came to be occupied by the pauper's body that eighteenth century science required for the theater of anatomy, and that modern culture, by appropriating common burial grounds for private property, had placed on the market. See Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage, 1973) and Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals," *Representations*, 1 (1983), 109–31.

21. Bakhtin's twin figures of the grotesque body and mass body offer a way of imagining an alternative social formation to our own. These figures have special appeal for people interested in researching political history from a viewpoint antagonistic to power, a viewpoint which privileges the history of the subject rather than that of the state, because Bakhtin himself obviously wanted to see in the past forms that resisted the joyless and fearful conditions of the totalitarian government under which he wrote. Thus he uses Rabelais to construct the figure of carnival that would idealize all those symbolic practices that resisted the exclusive political body organizing courtly romance. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965). Allon White and Peter Stallybrass use the figure of carnival to trace the history of resistance into the modern period in *The Body Enclosed* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). I wish to thank the authors for allowing me to see portions of their book while in manuscript.

22. In *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), Raymond Williams describes this process. (Especially see his discussion of the growth of a reading public and of a popular press, pp. 156–213). I have used, as the conceptual backbone of this book, his concept of a political revolution that took the

form of a cultural revolution. Unlike Williams, however, I have focused on the process of gendering that was crucial to the triumph of a form of power based on cultural control and the dissemination of information. My work is especially concerned with how writing for and about women influenced the kind of information that was produced by "the long revolution," as well as how such writing identified the targets at which such information was directed.

23. Addressing the same issue, Cora Kaplan writes: "Masculinity and femininity do not appear in cultural discourse, anymore than they do in mental life, as purely forms at play. They are always, already, ordered and broken up through other social and cultural terms, other categories of difference. Our fantasies of sexual transgression as much as our obedience to sexual regulation are expressed through these structuring hierarchies. Class and race ideologies are, conversely, steeped in and spoken through the language of sexual differentiation. Class and race meanings are not metaphors for the sexual, or vice versa. It is better, though not exact, to see them as reciprocally constituting each other through a kind of narrative invocation, a set of associative terms in a chain of meaning. To understand how gender and class—to take two categories only—are articulated together transforms our analysis of each." "Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism," (ms. p. 3). I am indebted to the author for allowing me to consult this manuscript.

## Chapter 1: The Rise of Female Authority in the Novel

1. Walter Ong, quoted by Irene Tayler and Gina Luria, "Gender and Genre: Women in British Romantic Literature," in *What Manner of Woman*, ed. Marlene Springer (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 100.

2. In *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), Elaine Showalter explains how by the 1860s, a number of prominent women authors had worked their way into editorial positions that, "like the one Dickens and Thackeray occupied at *Household Words* and the *Cornhill*, provided innumerable opportunities for the exercise of influence and power" (p. 156). The role of the critic-reviewer was not completely unknown to women even during the eighteenth century. See, for example, Elizabeth Montagu's *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760) and Anna Seward's critical essays in *Variety* (1787–88), in Ioan Williams, *Novel and Romance: 1700–1800, A Documentary Record* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), pp. 222–29, 357–66.

3. Certainly with the emergence of a theory of political economy and the influential writing of the Scottish philosophers like Dugald Stewart, contract theory had all but disappeared as a model of government. On this point, see Maxine Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy 1815–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 32–42, and Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Barrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 38.

producing a novel complete with illustrations. For example, the title page of Charlotte's youthful *The Search After Happiness* reads, "A Tale by Charlotte Brontë, presented by herself and sold by nobody, August the seventeenth eighteen hundred and twenty nine." (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

50. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer, ed. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969). See also Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), pp. 83-87.

51. Brontë's references to Jane Austen's fiction are from a letter to W.A. Williams in 1859, in *The Brontës: Their Friendships, Lives, and Correspondence*, vol. III, eds. T.J. Wise and J.A. Symington (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 99.

52. Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed. Stephen M. Parrish (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), pp. 334-35.

53. This is one of several points in this chapter for which I should acknowledge my debt to John Kucich for generously allowing me to consult portions of the manuscript of his book *Repression in Victorian Fiction*, forthcoming in 1987 from the University of California Press. His views are expressed in different terms than mine, but our work nevertheless converges on the point I am discussing here, namely, the productive aspect of Victorian repression. Kucich regards his work on Charlotte Brontë as "an attempt to redefine behavior in certain novels that has been tied to fear and guilt as, instead, a nineteenth-century strategy for exalting interiority" (ms. p. 5).

54. Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 38-72, and Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 153-81.

55. Blanche A. Crackenthorpe, "Sex in Modern Literature," *Nineteenth Century*, 37 (1895), 607-16.

56. "The Bury New Loom," in Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, p. 40.

57. "Miner's Catchism," in Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, p. 75.

58. Charlotte's testimony to her sister's genius was, I think, no less calculated than genuinely felt. Describing Emily's condition during the period when *Wuthering Heights* was composed, Charlotte uses these characteristically Victorian terms: "Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone. The awful point was, that, while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh." "Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell," in *Wuthering Heights*, pp. 7-8. It seems to me that the same peculiar cultural logic, which contains female creativity and gives it pathological causes and consequences, still underlies characterizations of the female artist and intellectual today.

## Chapter 5: Seduction and the Scene of Reading

1. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard J. Dunn (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), p. 83. Citations of the text are to this edition.

2. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 199-200.

3. Francis Sheppard, *London 1808-1870: The Infernal Fen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 361.

4. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 57.

5. Williams, p. 57.

6. Sheppard, p. 362.

7. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 226.

8. Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, ed. Andrew and Judith Hook (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 114. Citations of the text are to this edition.

9. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Natural Selection in Relation to Sex*, vol. II, eds. John Tyler Bonner and Robert M. May (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981; rpt. 1871), p. 398. Citations of the text are to this edition.

10. Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 257-58.

11. Sigmund Freud, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. III, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 50. Citations of the text are to this edition.

12. Toril Moi has discussed Freud's use of the figure of the relic, in "Representations of Patriarchy: Sexuality and Epistemology in Freud's Dora," in *Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism*, eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 186-87.

13. In his critique of the reigning critical theories that do not deal with ideology, Don E. Wayne isolates a problem inherent in those that do. Writing of Macherey and De Man, and referring to Tony Wilden, Althusser and Lacan as well, Wayne argues that they share "an epistemology in which negation is confused with absence, difference with opposition, and relationship with identity." This observation can help us understand why the oppositional strategies of Freudian discourse have remained relatively unshaken by literary critical procedures. It seems to me that most literary criticism allows the "absence" of maleness to remain confused with the "negation" of femaleness. Genitalizing the mother's body allows Freud to confuse the negation of that body with the simple absence of the penis. But the myth of the phallus just as clearly uses the mother's body as a transforming agency, or "constitutive presence which remains hidden because it cannot be articulated." "Gnosis without Praxis: On the Dissemination of European Criticism and Theory in the United States," *Helios*, 7 (1979-80), 15.

14. For a related discussion of Dora's "no," see Madelon Sprengnether, "Enforcing Oedipus: Freud and Dora," in *Dora's Case*, pp. 261-67.

15. Evidence for the mother's so-called "housewife's psychosis" rests exclusively on her strict adherence to middle-class codes. Before this moment in history, no one was called ill—let alone psychotic—for being too clean. It thus has

to be an important moment when, for the first time in history, a woman is considered pathological for her cleanliness while her syphilitic husband is considered more or less normal for carrying on an affair in the midst of the household.

16. So important is the scene of seduction to the transference situation that Freud would later advise a lesbian patient to be treated by a female analyst. "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," in *Standard Edition*, vol. XVIII, pp. 145–72. See also Suzanne Gearhart, "The Scene of Psychoanalysis: The Unanswered Questions of Dora," in *Dora's Case*, pp. 116–19, and Jacqueline Rose, "Dora: A Fragment of an Analysis," in *Dora's Case*, pp. 134–35. In his "Observations on Transference-Love," Freud describes the styles of women who either refuse to be seduced or are too easily seduced, in *Standard Edition*, vol. XII, pp. 157–71.

17. Steven Marcus has discussed some of the features this case shares with modernist fiction in "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History," in *Representations* (New York: Random House, 1975), pp. 247–309.

18. Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" *Standard Edition*, vol. XVII, pp. 247–48. Citations of the text are to this edition.

19. Freud's views on the nature and the importance of transference changed over time. For a discussion of the history of transference and its place in the analytic process, see Merton M. Gill, *Analysis of Transference*, Vol. 1, *Theory and Technique* (New York: International Universities Press, 1982), as well as H. Muslin and Merton M. Gill, "Transference in the Dora Case," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 26 (1978), 311–28.

20. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1975), p. 26.

21. Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (New York: Signet, 1960), p. 5.

22. Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in *Approaches to the Novel*, ed. Robert Scholes (Scranton, Pa.: Chandler, 1961), p. 188. Citations of the text are to this edition.

23. It is interesting to note that about this time Freud was revising the triadic model of desire that underlies his entire theory of culture. He sought to account for the importance of the mother as something other than an object for which father and son competed. As he revised the model of the mind, beginning with his paper "On Narcissism" about fifteen years after Dora's case and continuing with his fully developed model in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), he not only altered his conception of mental processes, he also gave greater emphasis to the preoedipal stages of development and therefore to the central importance of the mother in the dyadic relationship with the child of either sex. In this way, he provided a place for the mother in the development of culture that later psychoanalytic theorists would elaborate. It might also be noted that, at this time, Leonard Woolf was publishing English translations of all of Freud's writings and also all the publications of the British Psychoanalytic Institute. In addition, of course, many people close to Virginia Woolf were deeply involved in the psychoanalytic movement and followed closely its most subtle changes, including those brought about

by the work of Melanie Klein and her claims for the singular importance of preoedipal experiences in the formation of the individual. My point here is not to argue a cause-and-effect relationship between Freud's revision of his model and Woolf's emphasis on mirroring. I would, however, like to suggest that the efforts of Freud, Woolf, and other modernist writers to rediscover the importance of mirroring as one of the functions of the domestic woman certainly indicate that a battle was being waged for the kind of knowledge such women were supposed to possess.

24. Twenty years after she broke off her meetings with Freud, Ida Bauer introduced herself to Felix Deutsch as Freud's Dora. Deutsch, "A Footnote to Freud's 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria,'" in *Dora's Case*, pp. 35–43.

25. For a discussion of Woolf's style as part of a general revision of authorial strategies that accompanied the rise of modernism, see Nancy Armstrong, "A Language of One's Own: Communication-Modeling Systems in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Language and Style*, 16 (1983), 343–60.